

**Updating Newtown's
Plan of Conservation and Development**

Plan Memorandum #5
Parks & Recreation

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Hamden, Connecticut

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a summary of Newtown's parks and facilities supporting active recreation and to recommend ways in which the Plan of Conservation and Development can address maintaining and making improvements to those resources in light of expected future changes to the town. A separate memorandum on Open Space will address Newtown's passive recreational resources and needs.

Newtown's Parks and Recreation facilities are important components of the town's community character. Parks and Recreation facilities are attractive components of Newtown's landscape, while providing residents with opportunities for activities which are both healthful and educational. In addition, recreational facilities and programs act as community gathering places, fostering social interaction in an attractive environment. On another level, the quality of municipal recreational facilities and attendant services benefit property values and the marketability of the community.

Recreational facilities and activities in Newtown have evolved significantly during the past 20 years in an effort to keep pace with rapid population growth and ever changing community recreational desires. Today, organized sports and formal recreational program offerings are the focus of active youth and adolescent recreation. High participation rates in an increasing variety of recreational activities and programs, combined with extended sports seasons, requires dedicated facilities capable of meeting community expectations for publicly offered recreational services

II. EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES AND SERVICES

A. Existing Recreation Facilities- Parks and Recreation Department

Existing parks and recreation facilities and programs provide a wide array of recreational opportunities for Newtown's residents. These physical facilities and recreational programs are maintained and provided by the Newtown Parks and Recreation Department. The Parks and Recreation Department has a staff of 12 full time employees and 1 part employee and is under the municipal direction of the Newtown Parks and Recreation Commission.

Rather than disperse its recreational assets into small neighborhood sized facilities scattered throughout town, Newtown has developed a recreational service approach of concentrating its recreational resources in large centralized locations. In addition the town has developed a policy of maximizing available recreational resources by utilizing school playing fields and gymnasiums for activities sponsored by the Newtown Parks and Recreation Department and other community organizations. Conversely, Newtown's school system has utilized Parks and Recreation Department playing fields to support school sports programs.

The locations of the recreation facilities operated by the Parks and Recreation Department and the location of Newtown's public schools are identified on the following map. Descriptions of available recreation facilities managed by the Parks and Recreation Department follow.

Treadwell Park: This attractive and well maintained 60 acre park is located on Philo Curtis Road, in the Sandy Hook area of town. Treadwell Park is one of Newtown 's two principal recreational facilities and contains a variety of resources including; 2 multi-purpose soccer and lacrosse fields, 1 multi-purpose baseball and softball field, 1 baseball field located near the Sandy Hook Elementary School, 4 tennis courts, 1 outdoor basketball court, 2 picnic pavilions, extensive new playground equipment and an outdoor swimming pool and adjacent wading pool.

The rear portions of this park abut the Sandy Hook Elementary School and the Sandy Hook Athletic Club, both of which contain athletic fields utilized by the Parks and Recreation Department.

This town recreation facility was developed using a combination of funding sources, including non-town funding, and is open to the general public. Between 50 and 100 non-town residents purchase annual season passes to this facility.



Treadwell Park Pool and Play Area



Treadwell Park Playscape



Treadwell Park Pool



Treadwell Park Basketball Courts



Treadwell Park- Baseball and Soccer Fields



Treadwell Park- New Soccer Field

Dickinson Park: This beautiful 30 acre recreation facility is located on and accessed from Elm Drive and Brushy Hill Road, near the center of town. This facility is the Town's second principal recreational resource and possesses a different physical character from Treadwell Park. This facility offers fewer playing fields and more area landscaped as a traditional park for passive recreation. The recreational resources provided by Dickinson Park include: 1 softball field, 5 tennis courts, extensive play equipment, 2 picnic areas, 1 outdoor basketball court, 1 volleyball area, 1 outdoor swimming pool and extensive landscaped lawns.



Dickinson Park Playscape



Dickinson Park Tennis Courts



Dickinson Park Swimming Pool



Dickinson Park- Snack Time

Liberty Fields: Liberty Fields is located on Elm Drive, near the center of town and abuts the north side of Dickinson Park. This 13 acre recreational resource contains two, recently constructed, active recreational facilities including a Babe Ruth baseball field and a softball field. The portion of this recreational resource located between the north side of Dickinson Park and the south side of the ball fields is permanently dedicated for use as passive open space. This recreational resource is adjacent to the Village Cemetery grounds. There are current discussions about adding to the parking capacity of this facility.



Liberty Fields- Upper Ball Field



Liberty Fields- Lower Ball Field

Fairfield Hills: The former Fairfield Hills Hospital campus is located near the geographic center of Newtown and is the site of 8 playing fields. The area adjacent to Kent House contains 1 softball field, 1 small soccer field and 1 small combination soccer / lacrosse field. The latter field is not useable during softball games. There are no signs for these fields and parking is poor. The area adjacent to the former site of Watertown Hall contains 3 small baseball fields, accessed by the road serving the town's 5/6 school that is under construction. There is no signage and parking is poor. Two Babe Ruth baseball fields are located at Glander Fields, on Mile Hill Road South. This facility also contains 2 batting cages. Event parking spills-over to the local road.



Glander Fields Memorial



Glander Fields- Babe Ruth Baseball Field



Playing Fields Near Kent House



Playing Fields Near Kent House



Youth Ball Fields- New 5/6 School in Background



Youth Ball Fields- Near New 5/6 School

Walnut Tree Field: This recreation resource is located on Bridge End Farm Lane, near the eastern end of Walnut Tree Hill Road. This 17 acre facility contains 1 multi-purpose playing field which is used for baseball (90' base paths) and soccer. A very notable feature of this facility is its frontage on Lake Zoar, at the mouth of the Pootatuck River.



Walnut Tree Ball Field



Walnut Tree Field- Lake Zoar Access



Walnut Tree Field- Lake Zoar

Lake Lillinonah Town Park: This small recreational facility is located in the northeast corner of the town on Scenic View Drive, off of Hanover Road. This facility abuts the Town of Brookfield and access to the park is gained through the Town of Brookfield. This 3 acre recreation facility contains a boat launch ramp and a picnic area, with frontage on Lake Lillinonah.



Lake Lillinonah Town Park- Boat Launch



Lake Lillinonah Town Park

Oakview Field: This recreation facility is located on and accessed from Oakview Drive at Wasserman Way, near I-84 Exit 11. It contains 1 multi-purpose playing field, that is used for 2 small soccer fields and lacrosse. This is a small facility and the playing fields are of non regulation size. Signage, access and parking conditions are poor.

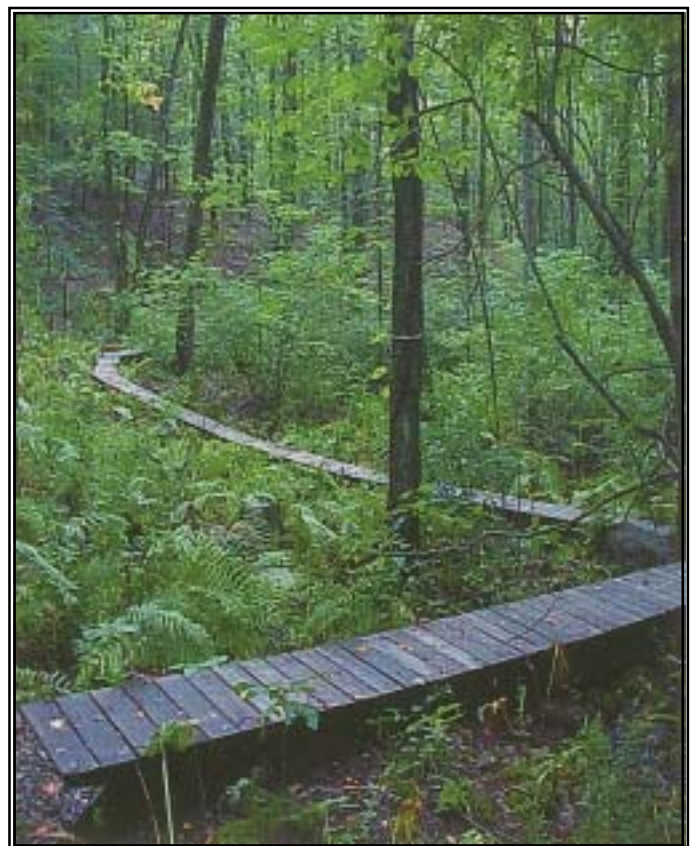
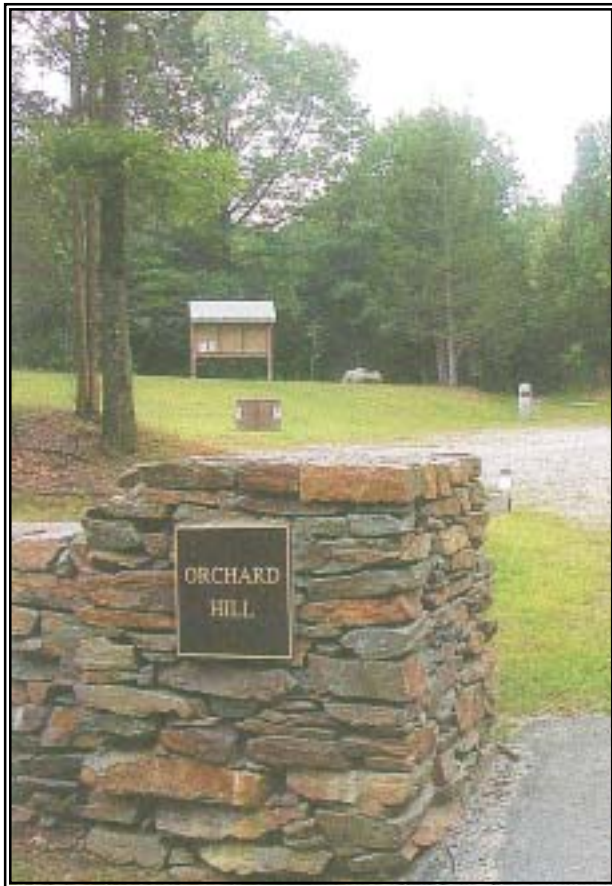


Oakview Fields- Soccer / Lacrosse



Oakview Fields- Soccer / Lacrosse

Orchard Hill Park: This 24 acre passive recreational resource, located in the south central area of town, is accessed from Huntingtown Road, where there is a small parking lot. Secondary access is available from Orchard Hill Road. This facility is named the Newtown Nature Center and contains a series of walking trails connecting woodlands, open fields, the north branch of the Pootatuck River and the remains of an old mill and “carding factory.” The trails on the periphery of this park are also used for horseback riding. Currently, there are discussions with the Lions Club to maintain park trails and to provide additional interpretative stations. The following graphic materials are from an attractive, informational town brochure.





Sandy Hook Athletic Club: The Sandy Hook Athletic Club is a privately owned recreational facility located on Riverside Road, which is utilized by the Parks and Recreation Commission. This facility, which abuts Treadwell Park and is near the Sandy Hook Elementary School, contains 1 small baseball field and a batting cage.



The Garage: This recreational building facility is located on Church Hill Road, just west of the railroad overpass. This facility houses the teen center, serving Newtown children in grades 6-12. The facility also houses the Mom & Me / KidsFit programs serving Newtown's younger children.

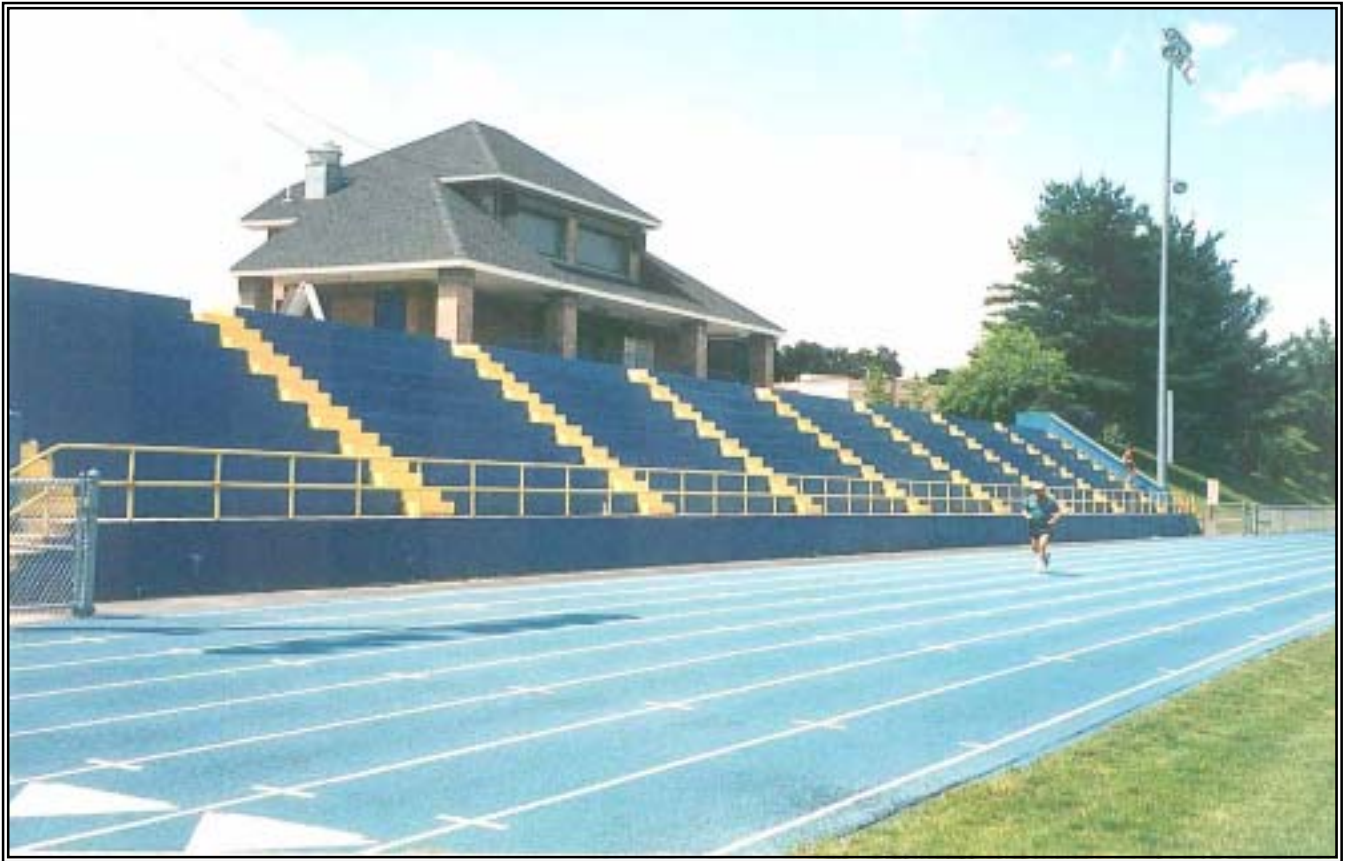


The "Garage"

B. Existing Recreation Facilities- Newtown School System

As described above, the Newtown Parks and Recreation Department and the Newtown Board of Education cooperate to maximize the utilization of available municipal recreation resources. A description of active, outdoor recreation resources associated with town schools follows.

High School: The High School is located on Route 34, near the I-84 Exit 11 interchange. This facility contains a variety of recreation resources including; 1 softball field, 2 combination soccer/lacrosse fields, 2 small soccer/lacrosse practice fields, 1 field hockey playing field (located on the outfield portion of the baseball field), 1 practice football field and 1 baseball field with 90' base paths, which is dedicated to school use only, during high school baseball season. The High School also contains the Blue and Gold Stadium, which includes a football field and an all weather running track.



Blue and Gold Stadium



High School Athletic Fields Under Reconstruction



High School Tennis Courts

Middle School: The Queen Street Middle School is located in the Borough and contains 1 baseball field (90' base paths), 1 softball field and 1 soccer field. The soccer field has poor drainage and is used primarily in the Fall.



Middle School- Softball Field



Middle School- Baseball Field

Hawley School: The Hawley School is located in the Borough on Church Hill Road and contains playground equipment, an outdoor basketball court, 2 Babe Ruth baseball fields and a multi-purpose playing field used for soccer, lacrosse and football.



Hawley School- Pop Warner Football Field



Hawley School Playscape

Sandy Hook School: Located on Dickinson Drive, off of Riverside Road, this facility contains playground equipment, a Babe Ruth baseball field and a small multi-purpose playing field used for soccer and lacrosse. The multi-purpose playing field is in poor condition.



Sandy Hook School – Babe Ruth Baseball Field



Sandy Hook School - Soccer Field

Head O'Meadow School: Head O'Meadow School is located on Boggs Hill Road and contains playground equipment, 1 softball field and 2 soccer fields. The smaller soccer field is in poor condition, limiting its use.



Head O'Meadow School- Softball Field

Middle Gate School: Located on Cold Spring Road in the southern end of town, this facility contains playground equipment and 1 small softball field.



Middle Gate School - Playscape

Table A. provides a summary matrix of municipal facilities supporting active recreation.

TABLE 1														
TOWN OF NEWTOWN														
Plan of Conservation and Development- 2002														
MATRIX OF TOWN MAINTAINED RECREATION FACILITIES AND SCHOOL FIELDS														
Facility Name	Play Equipment	Picnic Area	Tennis Courts	Basketball Court	Baseball Field	Inline Skating	Softball Field	Soccer Field	Field Hockey	Lacrosse Field	Football Field	Swimming Pool	Walking Trails	Additional Facilities, Features and Comments
Dickinson Park	1	2	5	1			1					1		volleyball, pavilion
Treadwell Park	2	1	4	1	1		1	2				1		2 soccer/lacrosse fields, 2 pavilions, baseball field by S.H. School, 1 multi-purpose baseball/softball field
Orchard Hill Park/Nature Center													X	Newtown Nature Center, walking trails
Walnut Tree Fields					1			1						baseball field- 90' baselines, soccer field in Fall
Liberty Fields						1	1							baseball field- 60' baselines
Oakview Fields								1		1				1 combination soccer/lacrosse field- non-regulation
Fairfield Hills					3	2	1	2		1				3 youth baseball fields, 2 batting cages
Lake Linnemonth		1												boat launch
Sandy Hook Athletic Club					1									1 youth baseball field, batting cage
Hawley School	1			1		2		1		1	1			1 combination field- football / lacrosse / soccer
Sandy Hook School	1				1			1		1				1 small practice soccer/lacrosse field in poor condition
Hend O'Meadow School	1						1	2						small soccer field in poor condition
Middle Gate School	1						1							1 small softball field
Middle School					1		1	1						baseball field- 90' baselines, soccer field drains poorly
High School			4		1		1	2	1	2	2	1		Blue and Gold Stadium for high school sports only, combination soccer/lacrosse fields, field hockey field in outfield of baseball field, 1 practice football field, batting cage, all weather track in stadium
TOTALS	7	4	15	3	9	5	8	15	1	6	3	3		
Source: Newtown Parks and Recreation Department														
HMA Field Inventory														

C. Municipal Recreational Services

The Newtown Parks and Recreation Department provides a wide variety of recreational program offerings for Newtown residents of all ages. The following is a sampling of some of the programs offered:

Camp Lash: Summer Day Camp is provided at Treadwell and Dickinson Parks for Newtown children between the ages of 4 and 11. This day camp program also provides early drop-off and late pick-up services for working parents.

Summer Sports Camps: Program offerings include several basketball camps, lacrosse, karate, tennis, soccer and golf camps, adult fitness “boot camp” and adult horse camp.

Mom & Me and KidsFit Programs- These programs are designed for Newtown’s younger children and their parents and include gymnastics, fitness, music and dance.

Town Park Swimming Pools: The family and individual memberships for the outdoor swimming pools located in Treadwell and Dickinson Parks are available to Newtown residents. The swimming pool located in Treadwell Park is also available to non-residents, for a higher membership fee.

Teen Center Activities: The Parks and Recreation Department sponsors High School Nights at “The Garage” each Friday and Saturday evening, with the exception of the second Friday of the month, which is designated as Middle School Night at “The Garage.” The Newtown Teen Center works with Newtown High School to provide students with opportunities for community service projects and activities.

III. FUTURE PARKS AND RECREATION NEEDS

A. Additional Recreation Playing Fields

Newtown’s active Parks and Recreation facilities are in good condition. Several of the elementary school playing fields utilized by the Parks and Recreation Department are reported to be in need of improvements to make them more usable.

The Newtown Parks and Recreation Commission has identified the additional recreation facilities required to support the level of recreational activities desired by Newtown residents over the next ten years. As a part of the process to purchase the 185 acre former Fairfield Hills Hospital campus, the Parks and Recreation Commission identified the need for 7 additional recreation / playing fields, to be constructed on the Fairfield Hills property. The Fairfield Hills campus is in the geographic center of the town and is well served by the areas state and local road network to make it accessible to town residents.

The Parks and Recreation Commission has participated in the town’s planning for the reuse of the Fairfield Hills property and has prepared a description of the 7 playing fields to be developed at Fairfield Hills. These include; 2 baseball fields with 90’ base paths, 2 adult softball fields, 2 combination soccer/lacrosse fields and 1 youth baseball field. These facilities are proposed to meet the town’s needs for additional recreation / playing fields for the next ten years.

Funding for the development of these seven new playing fields was included in the bond package adopted by town residents to facilitate the purchase of the Fairfield Hills property. In adopting this bond issue, the town has in effect signaled its intent to continue the policy of concentrating its recreational resources in centralized locations.

B. Additional Recreational Building Facilities

In participating in the process to plan for the future reuse of the Fairfield Hills campus, Parks and Recreation identified the need for a recreation center to support the variety of non-playing field recreational programs provided to residents on a year round basis. The desired recreation center would include: 2 oversized gyms to allow for two full court games, with lockers, showers and equipment storage; a smaller gym for karate, dancing and aerobic exercise programs; an auditorium; all purpose rooms for music, crafts and toddler programs; an indoor swimming pool; a new teen center; an outdoor skateboard facility; an outdoor basketball court and an outdoor playground.

Parks and Recreation has also identified the need for a 10,000 square foot maintenance facility. This facility would provide office space, vehicle maintenance, bathrooms, lockers and showers, outside storage for maintenance materials (clay, soil, etc.) and equipment storage and parking for cars and trucks.

C. Additional Recreational Improvements

Lake Lillinonah Town Park: There are two points of public boating access to Lake Lillinonah in Newtown. One is the Lake Lillinonah Town Park on the Brookfield town line and the other is the nearby Pond Brook State Boat Launch, on Hanover Road. The Parks and Recreation Commission has plans to improve the town boat ramp, expand parking for boat trailers and construct a new access road into the Lake Lillinonah Town Park, which would be entirely within Newtown.

Access, Parking and Signage: Because most of Newtown's recreational facilities are primarily accessed by motor vehicles, special care should be given to the provision of adequate signage, access and parking.

Several existing facilities, such as the three complexes of recreation fields at Fairfield Hills and the Oakview Fields have poor access and parking facilities. It is recognized that these town facilities are not located on town property and as a consequence, physical improvements may be made more difficult and harder to justify. However, the safety and convenience of those using these facilities needs to be addressed. In the case of Glander Fields, on-street parking is also an inconvenience to adjacent neighbors and may present a safety issue.

Attractive signage of Newtown's recreation resources can function to safely direct residents and guests to parks and playfields and to also add to the character of the town by proudly identifying Newtown's public investments in its municipal recreational resources.

IV. GOALS AND POLICIES

As documented in the Demographic Overview Memorandum, Newtown has experienced very significant population growth during the past 20 years. The single family detached nature of most of the town's residential growth during the past 20 years is projected to continue into the future. Many of the recreational needs typically addressed by municipal systems of neighborhood parks and playgrounds, in more densely developed communities, are met in Newtown by individual homeowners on their own house lots. The town's policy of concentrating resources for active, organized sporting activities in centralized locations was endorsed by Newtown residents in approving the Fairfield Hills bond issue in June of 2001.

Newtown's 1993 Plan of Development referred to the Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards developed by the National Recreation and Parks Association, as a means of judging the adequacy of Newtown's recreational resources. Those standards were prepared in 1987 and have not been updated. It is very difficult to develop locally applicable national standards for parks and recreational facilities and services because of the diverse character of communities across America and the regional variations in the desire for various types of recreational activities.

The following is a suggested goal and supporting policies to guide municipal actions regarding developed parks and active recreational resources during the next ten years. These suggestions build upon the goals and objectives of the 1993 Plan of Development.

Goal: Maintain and support recreational facilities at a level that enables the provision of recreational opportunities and programs which meet the expressed needs of townspeople of all ages.

Policies:

1. Continue the efficient utilization of existing Parks and Recreation facilities, including extended hours and creative scheduling.
2. Strengthen the existing cooperative relationship between Parks and Recreation and the School Board to maximize the use of all municipal recreational resources, to the benefit of Newtown residents.
3. Improve playing fields at Newtown's elementary schools and middle school to facilitate their improved utilization to support organized sports.
4. Utilize the Fairfield Hills campus as a key resource for the recreational facility needs of the town over the next ten years.
5. Develop recreational access to lake Zoar for Newtown residents.

Providing opportunities for informal recreational activities, including walking, jogging, bicycling and horseback riding, is an important consideration for the Plan of Conservation and Development and will be addressed in the Open Space Memorandum.